

Christmas Day Blaze Guts Business Block

KING STREET
BY
ROB RIVERS

CHRISTMAS CONFLAGRATION
The gaiety of Christmas day came to an abrupt halt in Boone, as the street's most disastrous fire wiped out the Qualls block of business buildings, put half a dozen institutions out of business, and for a time offered the threat of more widespread destruction. . . . Hundreds of people gathered as the flames fed on the tinder-dry wood of the aging structure and the owners of the building as well as of the businesses it housed, have the sympathy of the community in their tragic losses. . . . We are mighty sorry that this should have occurred, and shall hope that it won't be too long before the new structure is in place, and that the popular business establishments may resume their important places in the economy of the town. . . . Meantime, we must offer our customary felicitations to the Boone and Blowing Rock Fire Departments for the fine job they did in combating the flames, and preventing their spread to other buildings in the vicinity. . . . The men should have the gratitude of all the people for their unselfish service to their communities.

YOU TRY IT!
Incidentally there's always a few of the wiser ones who arm-chair one of these conflagrations, and from vantage points of comparative comfort, criticize the men who are wetting down the angry flames. . . . One of these fellows, so we understand, was offering a round of criticism—nothing was being done just right—or right at all, in his opinion. . . . Another bystander, took issue. He said: "You know those men are working like the devil. They're tired and hungry and cold, wet and just about frozen. They need help from folks who know how to do the job. They'll let you work. Why don't you fall in, or quit mouthing?" . . . The wise one quit talking and the men in the helmets went on with their profitless job.

BY FAR THE WORST
The fire was definitely the most destructive the Street has experienced, running considerably ahead of the Appalachian Theatre blaze which held the sinister record for a reasonably short time. . . . Then there was the Appalachian College fire, . . . Before that the destruction of the Bryan hotel and store, back in the other century long before the ken of this deponent, led amongst the fires of the city. . . . And we've heard of the big blaze that burned the Dr. Councill house, and the one that razed the courthouse on the Queen Street hill. . . . Doubtless these early-day conflagrations hurt worse than those of later years, when the ability to reconstruct is greater, but still Christmas day's blaze is apt to be referred to as the mightiest destroyer in this vicinity for years to come. . . . Built thirty years ago by J. L. Qualls, the burned buildings used to be known as the Qualls block. . . . Occupying a vantage point pretty close to the center of the business district, the property has always been valuable, and tenants have eagerly sought space in the building. . . . Its destruction hits heavily at the economy of the Street.

PLENTY OF WATER
Information from city hall is to the effect that the prolonged fight on the fire, brought the level of the water in the city reservoir down about a foot and a half, and that no water had to be supplied from the wells. . . . The city is being supplied with a six-inch pipeful of water from the gravity system, and officials say that the engines could have pumped the water indefinitely without impairing service to the people of the town. . . . which is mighty fine!

SEEN AND HEARD
One soldier held the door for another to pass onto the pavement. . . .
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FIREMEN SEEN BATTLING CITY'S MOST DESTRUCTIVE BLAZE —Exclusive fire photo by Palmer's Photo Shop

Boone, Blowing Rock Women Prize Winners
Miss Mary Helen Neill of Boone won the television set offered by the Boone Merchants Association, at the end of the first phase of the trade-promotion event Christmas eve. The set, an RCA, was bought from Swofford's Street.

Tenn. Youth Dies From Rifle Bullet
Mountain City, Tenn.—A Johnson County youth was accidentally shot to death yesterday at a Christmas family reunion party at Grayson, N. C.
Police said Julian Morrison, 16, was killed when a rifle he was handling went off. The mishap occurred just as the family was gathering in the yard for picture taking.
He was the son of Mr. and Mrs. Tom Morrison of near Mountain City.
World output of rubber drops in first ten months of 1952.

Building Plans Are Being Made By Wilcox, Greene
Plans for the rebuilding of the business block which burned on Christmas day are being rushed to completion, says George C. Greene, one of the owners of the property and it is likely that construction work will start within a few days.
Mr. Greene says he cannot definitely say whether the structure will be larger than the original building, but stated that it will be a modern building, and will be constructed as quickly as possible.
Mr. Perry Greene, local building contractor, will construct the new building.

Roby Byland Dies At Age 62
Roby Leander Byland of Blowing Rock died at the age of 62 on Tuesday, December 23, at the Blowing Rock Hospital, where he had been a patient for five months.
Funeral services were held at 10:30 a. m. December 27 at the Reins-Sturdivant Funeral Home in Boone, with the Rev. L. H. Hollingsworth in charge of the rites. Burial was in the Blowing Rock Cemetery. Names of survivors were not immediately available.

Mayor Winkler Thanks Volunteer Fire Fighters
Mayor Gordon H. Winkler takes occasion to express his gratitude to the fire departments of Boone and Blowing Rock for their fine work in preventing the spread of Boone's worst fire, at the same time, quenching the flames in time to save considerable property from the doomed structure.
The Mayor says: "The people of Boone are deeply appreciative of the fine work done by the Boone and Blowing Rock Fire departments. Working hour after hour they succeeded in bringing under control the worst fire in our history, and preventing other damage."
"We are especially grateful to the twenty firemen from Blowing Rock who worked faithfully with our men in this emergency. They have always aided us whenever possible, and we thank them sincerely for their sacrificial help."
"Our own Fire Chief, Howard Cottrell, who has managed our department for 10 years, deserves high praise for his loyalty and fidelity to duty. He stayed on the job for 30 hours, and some other firemen were present as long as 14 to 20 hours. All these fine people have the gratitude of the city officials for their patriotism in rendering such outstanding public service without any appreciable monetary reward."

Many Children Are Given Aid By Stocking Fund
Mrs. Mae Miller and Mrs. Claude Norris, co-chairmen of the Empty Stocking project which is sponsored annually by the Worthwhile Woman's Club, wish to thank everyone who participated in making this undertaking a success. Through community effort 463 stockings were filled and delivered. Of this number 18 were given to elderly people who live at the Boarding Home for the aged, the remainder were children. Each child's gift included candy, a toy and a small article of clothing such as gloves, socks, scarf or cap. Some used clothing was also distributed to the most needy families.
All those receiving gifts had been recommended by the Welfare Department or teachers in the various schools. Each school in Watauga County was allotted a quota based on its enrollment to make the distribution equitable and comprehensive.

\$167,000 Loss Felt By 6 Firms

The most devastating fire in the history of Boone, virtually destroyed the Qualls block of buildings, put six establishments out of business, and destroyed property which Fire Chief Cottrell estimated to be worth \$167,000, in a Christmas afternoon conflagration.
The Boone Fire Department, ably aided by firemen from Blowing Rock, fought the raging flames for more than six hours before the fire was brought under control.
During the progress of the fire traffic was routed around the scene. Electric service was cut off as the blaze raced through the high tension wires, and most of the residents of the community had Christmas dinner by candlelight.
The fire is believed by Fire Chief Howard Cottrell, to have either originated from the furnace or to have resulted from a burned out electric motor, but its origin has not been definitely determined.
The building, the property of Messrs George C. Greene and D. L. Wilcox, was a two-story brick and wood structure and was estimated to be worth about \$75,000. \$15,000 insurance was in force on the structure.
The Skyline Cafe, owned by Raleigh Cottrell, and the gathering place for all the civic organizations of the town, went up in the blaze. The loss was about \$25,000, and Mr. Cottrell was carrying \$10,000 insurance.
The Carolina Hotel, owned by Mr. and Mrs. Fred Church, and the town's second largest hotel, was gutted. The loss of furnishings and equipment said to have been \$20,000, one-half of which was covered by insurance.
The City Meat Market was valued at \$12,000 by the fire department head and there was \$1,500 insurance.
Damage to the Central Barber (Continued on page two)



REV. CHARLES D. STOKES
Rev. Chas. Stokes To Tell Of Urgent Needs In Korea

The Rev. Charles D. Stokes, missionary of the Methodist Church in Korea, will be guest speaker at Henson's Chapel Methodist Church, Monday, January 5, at 7:30 p. m., when the Methodist churches of Ashe and Watauga counties assemble for the quarterly check-up meeting and the annual missionary institute for the area. Rev. Mr. Stokes, a missionary since 1940, has been doing rehabilitation and evangelistic work in Pusan and Taejon for the past two years.
Rev. Mr. Stokes was one of three Methodist missionaries in Korea during part of 1950 and (Continued on page two)

Belk's Given First Place In Window Contest

Belk's Department Store received first prize for the most attractive Christmas window display among business places in Boone, the Merchants Association, sponsor of the awards, has announced. Willis W. Chester, Belk's manager, accepted the cash prize of \$10.00 on behalf of the store.
Second prize of \$5.00 went to McGuire's Beauty Salon, owned and operated by Mrs. R. W. McGuire, and Newton's Department Store received honorable mention for placing third. J. V. Caudill, Sr., is manager of Newton's.
Judges for this year's contest were Mrs. Mae Miller, H. Grady Farthing, and J. Paul Winkler.

Churches Ask For Clothing For Residents Korea

All members of the Boone community are urged to bring or send clothing to one of the Boone churches next Sunday, January 5 for shipment immediately to Korea. All Boone churches are joining in this urgent appeal. Persons unable to bring or send clothing to one of the churches are requested to call a local pastor or the Democrat office. Members of the Boy Scouts under J. B. Robinson and Bill Dixon, or of the Air Scouts under Crayte Teague, will visit designated homes on Sunday afternoon to secure clothing of which notice has been given and deliver it to the stated churches.
Supervising the drive, Rev. Joseph T. Shackford of Boone Methodist Church called attention to the statement in this issue of the Democrat by Rev. Charles Stokes, missionary to (Continued on page two.)

Stores Of City To Be Closed For New Year's Day

Most of the stores of the city will be closed Thursday of this week for New Year's Day, it was learned Tuesday from the Boone Merchants Association.
When it was found that a majority of the members of the organization favored closing on the first, the Association recommended this action.